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Trespassers on Easter Island: Explorers, Whalers, Slavers, Adventurers, Missionaries, Scientists and Tourists, from 1722 to the Present Time

Hanns Ebensten, 2001

(The Ketch and Yawl Press, Key West)

Hard cover, 157 pages, \$25.00. ISBN: 0-9641735-1-4

Review by Georgia Lee

Hanns Ebensten first went to Easter Island some 70 years ago and has been back to the island annually since 1967. He conducted Lindblad's first tour expedition when tourists were put up in tents, the flight from Chile took ten hours (Lindblad had to borrow navigators from Lufthansa for the charter flights), water was scarce, and Chilean officials were unhelpful. At that time, islanders were still confined to Hangaroa village. Foreigners could explore the island, but locals could not pass through

the gate.

Over the years, Ebensten has observed the many changes that have come to Rapa Nui, and comments about these are sprinkled through his chapters. His text is, as he himself mentions, unscientific. His love for the island is palpable.

The chapters are chronological, beginning with the first explorers, then whalers and traders, the slave raids, the missionaries. By Chapter 6 he is into the removal of antiquities from the island by various expeditions. Then we hear about the annexation by Chile, and Chapter 8 concerns Katherine Routledge's amazing time on the island. Chapters 9 and 10 pertain to colonial exploitation, and then, in Chapter 11, Ebensten tackles Métraux as "The Blinkered Scientist."

Gathering steam, in the next chapter we read about "The Hoaxing of Mr Heyerdahl", who is roundly dissed by the author. Chapter 13, "The New Destination" describes the start of tourism, the Canadian Medical Expedition, the US Air Force, Sebastian Englert, and Bill Mulloy on Easter Island.

In Chapters 14 and 15, "The Mixed Blessing of Tourism" and "Close Encounters" we get various facets of tourism, bringing us up to date on the inherent problems of tourism, such as its corrupting effect on locals who assume visitors to be rich, gullible, and oversexed. Some of Ebensten's personal stories of encounters between tourists and islanders are described, including problems that arise when visitors arrive looking for sexual encounters (of several persuasions) instead of statues!

The last chapter, "South Sea Sacrilege" takes on 'scientific' disasters such as the moulds made for the German exhibition (these, being improperly executed, caused severe damage to the statues); the Japanese gift of a crane (aptly called "The Yellow Peril" by Ebensten) to raise statues; and the ill-advised "restoration" of Ahu Tongariki. Despite worldwide condemnation of this project, it went forward. And then there was the idiotic Hollywood movie made on the island: a real catalog of disasters. The book ends with a short Epilog and a one-page Glossary. *Trespassers on Easter Island* is a light read, quirky but very engaging.

The Continuum Encyclopedia of Native Art: Worldview, Symbolism & Culture in Africa, Oceania and Native North America

Hope B. Werness

(New York, London: Continuum, 2000)

Review by Norman Hurst
Cambridge, Massachusetts

What may have led author Hope Werness to encyclopedize during her sabbatical year is unclear. The dust jacket introduces her as a potter, operator of a private humane society, professor of art history at California State University, Stanislaus, and the author of a book on mirrors. Neither she nor her publisher attempt to persuade the reader of her qualifications to undertake such an ambitious project as the present work would seem to be.

Problems with text occur from the very beginning. In her

introduction Werness takes the opportunity to pontificate about Native art:

- Native art is the embodiment of "concepts." (vi)
- The role of indigenous artists is to "create objects that reaffirm their cultures' worldview." (vii)
- "The distinction between form and content does not exist for the native artist; the two are inseparable." (vii)
- "The West links truth and beauty, but in Africa goodness and beauty are inextricably tied together." (ix)

Such globalizations and attempts to paint all "Native" art or all African art with the same brush are somewhat off-putting at the outset of a book purporting to be an Encyclopedia.

Werness's characterization of indigenous societies and artists as only producing art that embodies concepts of social good and her "handsome is as handsome does" moralizing are indications of a myopic, Pollyannaish worldview. Werness's favorite hunting grounds for concepts and images are "the rich art-producing areas of New Guinea, the American Southwest, and Nigeria." (ix) Art works from cultures or contexts outside her purview are glossed over, neglected, or omitted from consideration.

Most of the cultures of the Pacific and of North America receive rather short shrift in this work. Like artifacts themselves, three Pacific scholars, Thor Heyerdahl, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Margaret Mead are actually listed as entries. *Coming of Age in Samoa* is the only title mentioned in the text. As if confirming their status as relics, they are also not listed in the bibliography.

There are a modicum of misstatements, omissions, and conflicting statements from entry to entry throughout the main body of the work. This reviewer has selected a few examples especially for the benefit of Oceanists.

- Hawaiian feather work is cited as a material "used once and discarded, at least not maintained" (Introduction, vii).
- Masks: "Wearing masks is nearly universal among indigenous peoples..."
- God Sticks: "Maori god sticks ... Ceremonies invoking the god involved the use of attractive sacred materials (red feathers, sennit cord, and red ochre)..."
- Mead: "Margaret Mead [was a] student of George Boas..."
- Cannibalism: "... practiced in several Melanesian groups ... is one means of increasing ... power by ingesting the bodies of slain enemies (particularly their brains)."
- Drinks: "In FIJI ... yaqona ... was ritually consumed as part of RITES OF PASSAGE ceremonies."
- Lei: "The [Hawaiian] whaletooth lei seems to have been the most valued as early visitors, identifying them as amulets or idols, felt they had supernatural powers."

Many of the 874 total entries that deal with Pacific areas, (including three for Easter Island) are reasonably accurate condensations of secondary and in some cases tertiary sources, but they are never footnoted and almost never credited. The author relied heavily on introductory texts written by Christien Kaufmann and Adrienne Kaeppler in the recent compendium *L'Art Oceanien*. She evidently also relied upon Anne D'Alleva's *Arts of the Pacific Islands*. Werness appears to have consulted

mainly very general works like the two mentioned above or thin summaries like the volumes in the Shire Ethnography series.

It is annoyingly difficult to ascertain what her sources may have been for most of her entries, as in the few instances where credit is given to authors, no explicit citation (even so much as to title) is mentioned. This format leaves the inquisitive reader to pour over the bibliography armed with few authoritative clues or any guides to further reading should questions or interest persist.

The scholarship is thus seriously flawed, if not unethical. All citations to the *Encyclopedia* will be credited to author Werness, and not to the more than 260 sources she fails to credit. Even the most general suggestions for further reading are lacking in the entries. Instead, the reader is encouraged to participate in a scavenger hunt through the cross reference tables in the back of the *Encyclopedia* under eight headings: *Animals, Art, Artifacts and Techniques, Artists, Deity Archetypes, Geographical Subdivisions and Native Cultures, The Human Body, Natural Phenomena, and Materials*.

The book is constructed thus as a closed system, giving no encouragement for further study or means of enabling it. Readers new to the subject area will find the *Encyclopedia* a cul-de-sac with no useful signage. It is troubling to imagine that such a light gloss might be taken by young collegians as a definitive reference on Native Art. *The Dictionary of Art* (ed. Turner, 1996), cited by Werness seven times in her own bibliography, constitutes a model for formatting a reference volume for any author who truly intends to offer assistance and guidance to the user.

Werness blithely encourages her readers that, in effect, "what's past is prologue". The reader is informed in her dedication that "as short a time ago as fifteen years, there was very little work on the meaning and significance of images in indigenous cultures." She may well believe this, as only about 10% of the books that she does list in the bibliography were published before 1970. Her dedication further honors previous generations of scholars-explorers, archaeologists, ethnographers, anthropologists, ethnographers, anthropologists and art historians, yet her encyclopedia's text subsequently ignores their work. In the opinion of this reviewer, this is a great loss to her readers, many of whom may naively assume that the *Encyclopedia* will inform them about classic studies of the various fields it addresses.

In fact, where, if not in *The Encyclopedia of Native Art*, might readers be more likely to find reference to such giants of Pacific studies as Lewis, von den Steinen, Stephen Chauvet, Speiser, Hiroa, Brigham, Haddon, Kramer, Skinner, Koch, and Kelm, to name a dozen who come easily to mind? Where, indeed?

"Once the valuable work of systematizing was done," Werness writes, "scholars have increasingly been addressing broader questions." One apprehends that students will be addressing these "broader questions" armed with the *Encyclopedia* and its index of cross-references and headings, creating cross-cultural connections with smoke and mirrors.

The Encyclopedia of Native Art may well serve professor Werness's students to review for the final of "Native Art 101." It will give them "nuggets of information," as its introduction advertises, with which they can put an acceptable spin on nearly

any subject within the book's covers. This reviewer hopes, however vainly, that it will *not* be used in a "broader" context or taken for an authoritative reference on "Native Art," because it certainly is not.

Letters to the Editor

✉ DEAR EDITOR,

I have a correction to Grant McCall's article in Vol. 14, No. 3, pg. 98. He stated "Albuquerque was the next venue, owing to its being Carlyle Smith's long term institution and the place where the ground breaking first two volumes of the Heyerdahl expedition reports were co-published." Carlyle Smith actually taught at the University of Kansas, in Lawrence, Kansas. The member of the Norwegian expedition who did have a New Mexico connection was Edwin Ferdon. His association was not with the University of New Mexico or the Maxwell Museum in Albuquerque, but rather with the School of American Research and the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe, which published the reports as Vols. 1 and 2 of their Monograph 24, which Ferdon and Heyerdahl co-edited. By the time the volumes were published, Ferdon had relocated to the Arizona State Museum in Tucson, Arizona.

Sincerely,
Emily Ross Mulloy, Laramie

✉ DEAR EDITOR,

This is in response to your query about the most important issues facing Easter Island today. Certainly education is a vital issue. The level of education on the island is such that pupils sent to the mainland for further study are at least a year behind their coevals so they are treated as stupid, which they are not; it is the teaching which is woefully inadequate. In addition they are unaccustomed to modern urban life and are made fun of as 'country bumpkins'. There appears to be a total lack of pastoral care and no appreciation of the cultural shock that they suffer on leaving behind the supportive and close community which they are brought up in. As a result they seldom attain the qualifications that their intelligence should get them. On returning home, almost without exception they are left with no alternative but low level jobs. The recent news in *RNJ* 14(3) of the opening of a new school building in 2001 may hopefully be the beginning of serious efforts to raise the standard to that of the mainland.

I was on the island a year ago for the millennium celebration after an absence of 15 years. The transformation was unbelievable not only because of the thriving economy but with regard to the attitude of the islanders to their own language. Previously most parents had wanted only Spanish to be taught now they are proud of Rapanui. This means that bilingual facilities should be available. They are not. In comparison with the interesting array of primers, dictionaries, grammars and reading books in Tahitian for Tahitian children there is nothing on the Island.

Sincerely,
Veronica Du Feu, United Kingdom

✉ DEAR EDITOR,

My copy of José Miguel Ramírez' new book [*Easter Island: Land of Rocky Dreams*] arrived about noon on Christmas Eve. I was watching a football game on TV and planned to watch another one that afternoon.... But when I opened the package, I knew there would be no more football that day. Four and a one-half hours later, I had to put it down—but certainly didn't want to. What a beautiful, marvelous book! 'Way beyond any expectations I had. The photographs are so good as to almost seem unreal, especially the aerials and the underwater shots. I'm sure you appreciate them too, as you, like most of us, have always seen the island from ground level. Anyone who has ever been there, or wanted to go, should have a copy. His text is wonderful too, and his love of the island comes through. I wish I could tell the world.

Sincerely,
Avonne Bradshaw, Phoenix
[Editor's note: well, you just told some of the world, Avonne, and thanks.]

Easter Island Foundation

THE EASTER ISLAND FOUNDATION GRANTS COMMITTEE has awarded a US\$1000 grant towards the Easter Island research of graduate student, Tandy Shepard-Toomey of British Columbia. Ms Shepard-Toomey is a student of Dr Douglas Porteous. Congratulations Tandy; we look forward to having a report in one of our future issues.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

In December, the Easter Island Foundation sent out an appeal to potential donors to help us with our new efforts to support the people of Easter Island and to protect this outstanding World Heritage Site. Many of you responded very generously to our plea.

We outlined ways donors could help us provide better educational opportunities for the island's children by improving the island's school, which has no maps, globes or dictionaries and provides only one microscope for 900 students. Our Educational Supplies Committee has sent 10 laminated wall maps of the world and 10 colorful illustrated Spanish-English dictionaries and is pricing other teaching materials so we can buy and ship them to the island soon.

We asked for funding to provide a one-year scholarship for a Rapanui student to study on the continent. Each scholarship would provide \$2000 for a deserving student. Our Scholarship Committee now has outlined qualifications for selecting Rapanui students and our first scholarship will be awarded during the coming months.

We requested financial support of research grants for scientific projects on Easter Island and in Polynesia. Our Research Grant Committee has established guidelines for selecting deserving projects and we hope to award a grant later this year.

We are actively pursuing corporate sponsorship and are grateful to those who have made bequests to the Foundation. We deeply appreciate the donations from the following people who have given their support recently to help make these goals